

DATE: 28 Sept 72

TO: Ed

FROM: Paul

SUBJECT:

REMARKS:

There is no conflict in the article on Soviet grain, although I note that the headline is wrong -- where it refers to grains it should be talking about wheat.

Agriculture, we and the wheat dealers are all in agreement. The total grain crop will be down about 10% (160 vs 181) and the total wheat crop will be down 25% (75 vs 100).

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U.S. Puts '72 Soviet Grain Crop At About 75% of Harvest in '71

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 27 — The Soviet Union's winter wheat crop, plagued by severe weather, was down this year to about half of 1971 levels, according to latest estimates in the Department in Agriculture.

Fletcher Pope Jr., a grain specialist in the department, said today that although the Soviet Union had not yet released official figures on winter wheat production, information available to the department indicated that the crop was "probably not half what they produced in 1971."

But the spring wheat crop, now in the latter stages of harvest, is expected meet last year's mark, he said. This would bring the total 1972 Soviet crop to about three-fourths of last year's volume, which was reported at 100 million metric tons, almost evenly divided between the winter and spring crops. A metric ton is about 2,200 pounds.

The seriousness of the decline, Mr. Pope said, could be partly offset by diverting a larger share of the wheat to human food consumption. According to the department's information, the Soviet Union has used 13 million to 20 million metric tons for livestock in recent years.

Among New York grain dealers the prevailing view is that the over-all Soviet grain crop including such feed grains as barley and oats, is down about 10 per cent from 1971 levels. One dealer said that he

thought the total Soviet 1972 crop would be 160 million metric tons, against last year's 181 million. He added, however, that the Soviet goal for 1972 production was in the area of 190 million to 195 million tons, pointing to a drop below expectations of 30 million to 35 million tons.

In the case of wheat, a factor more important than reduced volume may be damage to the quality of the crop. It is known, he said, that the winter crop was adversely affected by hot, dry weather in the European part of Russia where that grain is grown.

Indications are that the spring wheat will also be of lower quality, because of a colder-than-normal season in what is known as the "new lands" area east of the Ural Mountains. If the damage is serious, the wheat may not be suitable for human consumption.

This year's weather could have an effect on next year's Soviet grain production, Mr. Pope noted. Winter grains are being seeded now and "because it has been so dry, the seeding is not going as rapidly as it has in the past several years," he said.

As of Sept. 18, according to the department, 42 per cent of the total winter grain area had been seeded. Expectations are that the pace will be increased in October, however, and that the planting will be completed in time.